

Book reviews

Dermatology. A Medical Artist's Interpretation

A J Geras 140 pp ISBN 0-907925-01-4
Basle: Sandoz Pharma, 1990 (Available direct from publisher)

I have always been impressed by the skill of medical artists, and it is regrettable that their expertise frequently does not receive the recognition it deserves. With modern materials and techniques, combined with the requisite skill, the quality of work produced by a medical artist can be superb, and this is certainly the case in this book. The contents are a series of paintings designed to show both healthy and diseased skin in a dynamic, three-dimensional form. One is so used to seeing flat, diagrammatic representations of the skin in textbook illustrations that this three-dimensional approach provides not only a refreshing visual change, but also a much more tangible presentation of cutaneous anatomy and pathophysiology. This type of illustrative work is ideal for teaching purposes as it conveys a much more vivid impression of the subject than the familiar black and white line drawings.

Interspersed with the paintings are a number of excellent electron micrographs of various skin components. There is little text, but more extensive verbiage is not necessary, as the paintings are comprehensively labelled, and do not require further explanation for those with some knowledge of dermatology.

The artist is to be congratulated, not only for the outstanding visual quality of her work, but also for the clarity of her interpretation of skin anatomy and pathology.

D A BURNS

Consultant Dermatologist
Leicester Royal Infirmary
Leicester LE1 5WW

Otolaryngology: An Illustrated History

N Weir £39.00 ISBN 0-407-00924-8

Guildford: Butterworth Scientific, 1990

Mr Weir's book is an admirable addition to the rather limited number of books dedicated to the history of otolaryngology. It is nicely set out and illustrated and could be used either for reference or for general interest. Each section of the book is accompanied by a good bibliography, giving any serious researcher an opportunity for more specialized research into individuals or subjects.

Mr Weir has, to some extent, overcome that difficult interface between what is history and modern times by devoting a substantial part of the book to the 20th century and some amusement may be derived from finding the name of Sir Donald Harrison already committed to a history book.

This book would not be out of place on the shelves of any practising ENT surgeon and I think would be an essential reference volume for any departmental or university library.

D B MATHIAS

Consultant ENT Surgeon
Freeman Hospital
Newcastle upon Tyne

Resuscitation Handbook

P J F Baskett £9.95

ISBN 0-3974-46454 London: Gower Medical, 1989

This very readable book is divided into five main sections; Introduction, Cardiac Life Support, Trauma Life Support, Pain Relief and Training Requirements.

The first section deals with causes of cardio-respiratory arrest, patients who should not be resuscitated, infection hazards and definitions of death - all complex subjects dealt with very clearly and competently.

The Cardiac Life Support section covers clearance and maintenance of the airway with very clear illustrations, from the simplest to the most complex techniques. The algorithms are logical and easy to follow; perhaps they should contain some numbers since the word derives from an Arabic system of numeration. The illustrations are attractively laid out although some patients seem to have a posterior epiglottis. Instructions are clear, some mention of the force required for cricoid pressure should be made.

The section on Support of the Circulation shows the different methods of cardiac massage, and restoration of the spontaneous heartbeat shows clearly the different ECG appearances which may be encountered. The basics of defibrillation and pacing are covered, emphasizing safety aspects to the operators. The treatment of life-threatening arrhythmias is covered by a series of clear algorithms.

A useful section on practical procedures, such as the relief of pneumothorax and the pneumatic antishock garment is included. The secondary survey, which follows initial resuscitation, is also emphasized with effect, as is Pain Relief.

This book represents a distillation of facts about a subject which concerns medical people of all disciplines and levels of seniority. It should be a standard text available in all departments and wards. Peter Baskett's pan-global experience in the subject has given rise to an authoritative non-controversial account.

A N BURLINGHAM

Consultant Anaesthetist
Cheltenham General Hospital

Experimental Researches on the Causes and Nature of Catarrhus Aestivus (Facsimile of the first edition 1873)

C H Blackley 222 pp £23.50

ISBN 1-871395-00-3

Oxford: Oxford Historical Books, 1988

In this classic of clinical research, Blackley studied the causation of hay fever in himself primarily, and in seven other subjects. He starts in the classical manner with a review of the literature ending this section with a comprehensive criticism of the earlier work suggesting that heat was a more active cause of the condition than the traditional association with the flowering of grass or hay. After showing a lack of association with a number of factors that had previously been suggested as having an association with hay fever, Blackley starts his experiments with grass and other pollens which were applied to the mucous membranes of the nose, producing the symptoms of hay fever. Application to the conjunctiva or inhalation produced conjunctivitis and asthma respectively. In further experiments he attempted to

study what constituents of pollen formed the exciting cause of hay fever using microscopy and making observations on the effect of fluid contact and the influence of water vapour from respiration.

The second major part of the investigation was to perform pollen counts in the atmosphere and relate this to the prevalence of hay fever and to the intensity of the symptoms. For this purpose he devised a number of instruments. The final device arranged for the exposure of microscope slides covered with glycerine under a little roof and these were exposed for 24 hours before they were removed and the number of pollen grains counted under the microscope. In 1866, for example, pollen counts were found to increase in early June, reach a peak in late June and fall off throughout July. In the final group of experiments, Blackley sent microscope slides up in kites to altitudes of between 500 and 1500 feet, for 6 hours. The number of pollen grains deposited on the slides was found to be greater at higher than at lower levels. These studies were to demonstrate that pollen could be blown long distances in the wind and cross the whole of Manchester and two of its outlying townships. In these studies Blackley was much influenced by Darwin's observations on HMS Beagle that dust could be carried for very long distances by atmospheric currents. In addition, there is a peculiar sociological chapter in which Blackley tries to understand the increased incidence of hay fever in terms of the population movement from a rural to an urban environment.

Altogether, this is an excellent record of one man's scientific thought and approach in a mid-19th century environment. He recalls his problems in devising his apparatus and is as critical of his own results as he is of those of his colleagues. It is extremely easy reading and one can live with him both through his achievements and his clinical observations of his own symptoms.

J L TURK
Hunterian Institute of the Royal College of Surgeons of England

Anaphylaxis (Facsimile of the first English edition 1913) Charles Richet 266 pp £21.50
ISBN 1-871395-02-X

Oxford: Oxford Historical Books

We are all familiar with the first description of the phenomenon described by Portier and Richet in 1902 as a result of the injection of an extract of the filaments of the sea creature *Physalia* into a dog for which they coined the term 'anaphylaxis'. This has

a romantic touch as it occurred as a result of a suggestion by Prince Alfred of Monaco when they were guests during a cruise on his yacht in the South Seas. During the subsequent decade anaphylaxis became a major subject for immunological research, resulting in as many as 194 papers being published in an attempt to analyse the phenomenon. This was during the latter part of what is now known as the first golden era of immunology.

This book is a record of that first exciting decade by Richet, one of the first observers of this phenomenon. It was particularly exciting for one who lived through the second golden era of the fifties and sixties, to read how far the generation of nearly 90 years ago progressed and to interpret their experiments in terms of current knowledge based on immunochemical and pharmacological advances 50 years later. With modern knowledge of immunochemistry and pharmacology we think we can interpret many of their experiments. Thus, for 'toxigen' read IgE. Their inability to separate phenomena due to IgE from those due to immune complex formation containing IgG or IgM and complement caused them some confusion. However, the term 'anaphylatoxin' had already been coined and they were aware of its derivation from complement. Richet was aware that the effect was not completely identical to that of anaphylaxis. Are we any nearer to explaining the experiments on 'anti-anaphylaxis'? Were some due to immunological tolerance, or perhaps to blocking antibody?

One sees the earliest glimmer of an approach now popular with molecular immunologists looking for a chemical difference between the preparatory material and the exciting material. One can see successors to this approach in attempts to find differences in the chemical nature of antigenic groups on the same molecule that stimulate T and B lymphocytes or T-cell mediated allergic reactions versus resistance to infection. One wonders whether later generations will feel the same way about these experiments as we do about the two phases of the generation of anaphylaxis. However, the section on the specificity of the exciting and preparatory substances was a forerunner of later work on the specificity of serological reactions even to the possibility of using this reaction in forensic medicine.

For one who entered immunology 35 years ago, this book recalls the state of play as it was then and emphasizes how much we have advanced. It also emphasizes how science progresses in 'fits and starts'.

J L TURK
Professor of Pathology
Hunterian Institute of the Royal College of Surgeons of England